

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT THE 2006 U.S. ELECTIONS

All American citizens are reminded that 2006 is an election year in the United States. Every seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and one-third of the seats in the U.S. Senate are being contested this year. Overseas citizens are eligible to participate in primary, run-off, and special elections that occur throughout the year, as well as the general elections in November.

We strongly encourage you to register to vote and/or request absentee ballots as early in the year as possible to ensure that you will receive all ballots for which you are eligible. Should questions or problems occur, you would still be able to address them in time to vote in the 2006 general elections.

The following is the basic absentee voting process:
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- You complete an application form (see below) and send it to local election officials in the U.S.
- The local official approves your request, or contacts you for further information
- The local official sends you an absentee ballot
- You vote the ballot and send it back in time to meet your state's deadline

The official US Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov. It has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the downloadable absentee ballot application, state-specific instructions for completing the form, links to state and local officials, and a downloadable emergency ballot.

Overseas citizens groups help people to vote. We encourage you to contact Democrats Abroad, Republicans Abroad or other American citizens groups or organizations for assistance in registering to vote and requesting absentee ballots. Links to these groups are at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/ocitlinks.html>.

To register to vote and to request an absentee ballot, download the Federal Post Card Application at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefpca.html>. You can also obtain this form from overseas American citizens groups or from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Fill it out and send it in, following the guidelines for your state. A postage-paid envelope template, valid if you are using the U.S. postal system, is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/returnenvelope.html>.

Each state has different voting procedures. Information about your state's procedures is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>. Information about your state's deadlines to register and vote is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>. A calendar of election dates is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>.

States sometimes make last-minute changes. There may be late changes to your state's voting calendar, procedures or deadlines. When these occur, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) will issue a News Release. News Releases are available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/releases.html>.

Be an educated voter. Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues is widely available and easy to obtain via the Internet. Use the links appearing on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/otherlinks.html>, or choose any one of several search engines to locate articles and information.

An emergency ballot is available. If the ballot receipt deadline is approaching, and you have not yet received the blank ballot from local officials, you can download an emergency ballot, write in the names of the candidates and the offices for which they are running, and send it back in time to meet your state's ballot receipt deadline. The emergency ballot (SF-186, Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, or FWAB) is available on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/forms.html>.

The Voting Assistance Officer at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Japan is available to answer questions about absentee voting. If you wish to speak to a Voting Assistance Officer, see our website for complete contact information for the Embassy and Consulates. Look for notices from the Embassy/Consulate throughout the year relating to the 2006 elections.

Again, we strongly encourage you to begin this process as soon as possible.

